



## A Declaration of His Highness, inviting the people of *England and Wales* to a day of Solemn Fasting and Humiliation.

**T**hat We all in these Nations have more then ordinary cause to humble Our selves, and to lay Our mouthes in the dust in Fasting and Prayer before the Lord at this time will undoubtedly be agreed by all.

Amongst many others let these following motives induce Us to be very solemn and serious in this Duty.

I. We having made Peace with all Our Neighbour Nations, and upon righteous grounds deeply engaged in a War with the *Spaniard*, with whom We had no peace, but where he pleased, and from whom we could obtain none for the future without subjecting the Lives, Liberties and Estates of the People of these Nations trading thither, to the bloody Inquisition and other Papall determinations, nor unless we would quit Our claims of satisfaction for multiplied injuries done Us in shedding the innocent blood of this people, and expulging them out of divers Islands, of which they were justly possessed, as is more at large expressed in the late Declaration, holding forth the grounds and reasons of Our undertaking against them. The Lord hath been pleased in a wonderful manner to humble and rebuke Us, in that expedition to the *West Indies*, which although we apprehend was not in favour of the Enemy, yet gives Us just reason to fear, that We may have either failed in the spirit and manner wherewith this business hath been undertaken, or that the Lord sees some abomination, or accursed thing by which he is provoked thus to appear against Us.

II. That whilst the Lord has thus abased Us (instead of humbling Our selves under the mighty hand of God, and each man searching and repenting of the plague and evil of his own heart, and mourning for so great an affliction upon the whole Land, and more principally on the interest and profession of the Gospel in all the world) some most unnaturally rejoice, others are apt hastily to apply according to their fancies; being too forward to give a reason of the Judgements of God, which are so great a deep, and particularly to assign the reason of this sharp dispensation, not considering that the Lord may for tryal as well as in judgement, exercise the faith of his people. Others imputing the cause onely to the evil of the Magistrate, who profess (if there were no other provocation) even for their own sins justly to have incurred all this, and much more, and hope they can in some measure desire to redeem the loss sustained by this heavy stroke, with their lives, desiring nothing more than a conviction from the Lord. And have appointed this day of Humiliation, that the Magistrate, together with all such as fear the Lord, may deal impartially with their own souls, before the Lord, in a matter of so great concernment.

III. That the People of God continue still in their animosities, and improve not such strokes unto Love and Union, whilst by the advantage thereof, the common Enemy, both at home and abroad, take encouragement to hope, that the time hastneth wherein they shall swallow Us up; but instead thereof, some of the same faith in all things necessary to salvation, upon private thoughts of their own, hold up still a quarrel with, and opposition to their Brethren, about Christs Kingdom, or rather their own understanding of the time, and manner of it, We mean those of them, who will not give way that others wait upon the Spirit of God for light in this matter. Others still differing about forms, even to the breach of the Royal Law. Others repining at the present begun Reformation, though having much tendency to good, both as to the comfort and security of the Godly, and discountenance of wicked men, and wickedness; wherein through God it hath had some small effect, and also (which is most sad) even because it hath had the success to unite more good men upon the old principles of Love and truth then any expedient the providence of God hath brought forth since these troubles.

IV. That still we murther and are unquiet, unthankful to the Lord, weary of our Peace, making it a light thing to run again into blood; We despise Magistracy, and are become weary of the preaching of the Gospel, and other Ordinances of Christ.

V. Oathes, prophaneess, unmercifullness, oppression, covetousness, and seeking great things in such shaking times, not mourning when the Lord calls to it, nor being sensible of our condition.

These and many more are just causes and provocations to us to mourn, especially taking in this aggravation that the Lord hath done for us, yea even for his people here, above what he hath done for any people.

VI. Adde to these the condition of the Protestant Churches abroad, the members whereof have very lately been massacred in *Piedmont* without sparing age or sex, are bleeding in *Switzerland*, divers there having been put to death for no fault, but being Protestants; the designs upon the whole Interest by the Popish party almost in all places of *Europe*, and the grounds of their quarrel and persecution for Religion, more clear and avowed then in many years before.

VII. And lastly, That the Lord would pardon the iniquities both of Magistrate and people in these Lands, wherein the Magistrate desires first to take shame to himself and find out his provocation, as well as lay it upon others, and that the Lord would pardon our iniquities and convert us unto himself, and bless our poor friends in the *Indies*, and go out with our Fleets, and prosper our undertakings as formerly by his own blessed presence, and unite us in love, causing mercy and truth to meet together, and righteousness and peace to kiss each other, and thereby exalt his own great name, make our Land glorious and bless his cause and people in all the world, and hasten the time of the pulling down of Antichrist, and expelling out of these Lands the unclean Spirit, Is this day of solemn humiliation and prayer appointed to be upon *Friday* the 28. of *March* 1656.

Given at *Whitehall* this 13. of *March* 1655.